

Mitigate

“In addition to the four federal disasters, West Virginia also had a state declared disaster in May 2003 that affected Braxton and Webster Counties,” Kappa said.

Hurricane Isabel brings unique opportunity for WVOES

The West Virginia Office of Emergency Services anticipated and placed emergency service resources in areas most likely to be hit by Hurricane Isabel.

"The National Weather Service's ability to track and monitor hurricanes gave us the unique opportunity to be proactive in placing rescue and recovery resources where they would be most needed before the emergency event occurred," said Stephen Kappa, WVOES director.

"Swiftwater Rescue Teams and West Virginia Army National Guard Liaison Teams were in place before the first wind and rain from Isabel affected the state."

"The eight deployed Swiftwater Rescue Teams helped evacuate or rescue 94 individuals who were in danger."

Because Isabel lost power and changed course, West Virginia had much less damage than neighboring states. Infrastructure in the eastern panhandle suffered the worst damage.

On September 24, 2003, President Bush granted West Virginia a federal declaration for public assistance.



Six counties were designated for all categories of Public Assistance while four counties were designated eligible for some categories of Public

Assistance. The Federal Emergency Management Agency pays for 75 percent of eligible disaster expenses of state and county governments in Public Assistance designated counties.

West Virginia Office of Emergency Services

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Director's message



Stephen S. Kappa
West Virginia Office of
Emergency Services Director

We have just closed out one of the most demanding years in recent memory in terms of federal and state disasters while completing a highly successful year in terms of accomplishments. West Virginia led the nation in federal disaster declarations in fiscal year 2003. The WVOES was activated for a total of 127 days, involving four federal disaster

declarations, one state disaster declaration and two homeland security alerts. Nearly \$94 million in federal and state disaster funds were coordinated and processed by the WVOES staff for disaster relief last year.

The staff, working with county project officers, acquired more than 400 flood-prone properties under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Families who lived on those flood prone properties will no longer have to suffer the trauma and loss caused by the inevitable river and flash flooding.

The WVOES staff processed nearly \$10 million in federal grants for the improvement of state and county emergency preparedness programs. A total of four Regional Response Teams were fully equipped and trained during fiscal year 2003, with a fifth team fully trained and awaiting equipment acquisition. Nearly 400 Regional Response Team members and county

emergency services personnel received training conducted or sponsored by the WVOES.

This means our state is safer and better prepared for large scale natural or man-made incidents.

We also have completed the implementation of a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) program, partnering with the West Virginia University to provide critical infrastructure data for homeland security.

The WVOES staff provided the impetus to establish a total of 22 local Citizen Corps Councils at the municipal level, the second highest total of new councils established within FEMA Region III last year.

Most significant, West Virginia was the first state to complete and submit comprehensive local and state hazard mitigation plans required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency for fiscal year 2003.

RRP improves state's emergency response



RRP team members from left to right: Jim Woods (S.C.F.D.), Les Smith (C.F.D.), John Taylor (S.C.F.D.), Raymond Mann (S.C.F.D.), Virgil White (S.C.F.D.), Mark Simmons (S.C.F.D.), Shawn Alderson (N.F.D.) and Neal Sharp (program director.)



This respiration equipment will protect RRP team members in rescue situations in which the air is not safe.



This tractor trailer was designed specifically to hold and transport the large number of tools and equipment that would be needed to rescue individuals affected by a catastrophic event, such as a bombing or building collapse.

In 2003, the West Virginia Regional Response Program (RRP) progressed from a plan to four fully equipped and staffed regional teams as well as 350 certified team members.

Of the six regional response teams, regions one, two, five and six are fully operational.

This cooperative program, designed to respond to man-made and natural catastrophic events, is comprised of county first responders who receive extensive training and certification.

In addition to regular team member training, three full-scale exercises were conducted to test and evaluate the equipment and member training. The exercises were designed for members to practice the procedures and skills that would be used in a large scale incident response.

West Virginia's RRP was invited to participate in the Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC) in Indianapolis, Indiana Apr. 26 thru May 1, 2004. The team members will be

displaying Urban Search and Rescue equipment, including the new trailer used to transport the equipment.

"The invitation to the FDIC conference is a big honor," said Neal Sharp, WVOES technical hazards director.

"When Homeland Security Director, Tom Ridge, came to West Virginia to announce the allocation of \$24 million dollars in grant funding to West Virginia first responders, he called our RRP a model program."

"We are excited about sharing our knowledge and experiences with the conference attendants who will be coming from all over the country."

"I am really pleased with our momentum, but we are not going to rest on our laurels."

"We are moving full speed ahead."

To get the other regions operational, equipment costing \$12 million has been ordered. The equipment has started to arrive at the RRP warehouse. The equipment includes Urban Search and Rescue utility trucks, tractor trailers, hazard suits, decontamination equipment and monitoring tools.

"Having the Regional Response Program has improved emergency response services for all types of emergencies in our state," said Stephen S. Kappa, WVOES director.

"The local first responders are getting more training and cutting edge equipment to better protect West

County Citizen Corps grows

The number of counties with Citizen Corps councils has grown from 14 to 22 since 2003.

"These local programs benefit residents and emergency services personnel, because the programs teach people how to be better prepared and, therefore, safer in emergency situations," said Karen Settles, WVOES Citizen Corps/CERT coordinator."

"Research shows that people in emergency situations often don't do what they are 'told,' but will respond almost automatically and do what they are 'trained' to do."

"Citizen Corps also encourages neighbors to help neighbors and encourages people to volunteer to help emergency responders."

The mission of Citizen Corps is to help individuals make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond

to threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds.

The Citizen Corps program is coordinated nationally by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

On the state level, the West Virginia Office of Emergency Services and the West Virginia Commission for National Community Service coordinate the program.

The West Virginia Citizen Corps Council was established to encourage the development and operation of the local councils.

The county councils work to develop a local strategy to fulfill the Citizen Corps mission.

For more information, contact your local emergency services director or the WVOES Citizen Corps coordinator, Karen Settles, at (304) 965-2779.

Visit www.citizencorps.gov.

All counties to be equipped with E-Team emergency and event management software

West Virginia counties will soon be equipped with E-Team software, the same incident management software used by the West Virginia Office of Emergency Services and other government agencies across the nation.

This is an exciting addition, funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security,” said Stephen Kappa, WVOES director.

“A county emergency services staffer will be able to log in at an emergency operations center or anywhere with Internet access to review or add situation reports and resource requests.”

“This software links key personnel from different agencies, so that they have a common operational picture as well as better communication and collaboration.”

“All of our citizens will benefit from the addition of E-Team software.”

Originating as a wireless Internet-based tactical command and control system, this emergency and event management software was developed by E-Team with the help of emergency management veterans from the City of Los Angeles in 1998.

Many government agencies have adopted the use of E-Team software to manage emergencies and events.



This is the first screen when logging on the E-Team event and emergency management system.

Among those agencies is the New York City Office of Emergency Management, which used E-Team software to

manage emergency services in response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack.

The E-Team software system had been contracted and was scheduled to go online September 17, 2001 in New York City.

When Tower Number 7, which housed the city's emergency management office, collapsed, the city's databases were put on E-Team company servers.

By Friday, the system was online and the city was connected. E-Team software is still used by the NYCOEM.

Now all E-Team databases are placed on servers housed away from emergency operations centers.

“West Virginians will have the very best software to help keep them safe,” Kappa said.

“We are excited to be able to offer the benefits of the E-Team system to county emergency services directors and the citizens of this state.”



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